APHRODITE
AWAKENS!

TA-DAHH!!
I DID IT, HITOMI!!
YA-HOOO!
H-HUH...?
AH...

THEY DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT THIS MORNING...
..TEMPORARILY CLOSED? THAT'S WEIRD.
WE ARE TERRIBLY SORRY FOR THE INCONVENIENCE, BUT CAT'S EYE IS TEMPORARILY CLOSED
IT'S AN ENGAGEMENT RING...
..TODAY I FINALLY PAID OFF THE LOAN, SO I SAID WE COULD CELEBRATE. I'M SURE SHE HEARD ME..
WE ARE TERRIBLY SORRY FOR THE INCONVENIENCE, BUT CAT'S EYE IS TEMPORARILY CLOSED
..SHEESH WHEN IT COUNTS, NOTHING GOES OUR WAY
DAMN. I WAS GONNA GIVE HER THIS AND SAY WE SHOULD GET MARRIED THIS YEAR!!
WE'VE BEEN ENGAGED FOR A YEAR ALREADY

HITOMI...ARE YOU READY?
HITOMI !?
HITOMI!!
...
HITOMI, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE STARING INTO THE SKY?
.....
SPAA AACE
IN REAL LIFE, ABOUT NOW...
TOSHIO'S RING WOULD BE ON THIS FINGER. AND HE'D BE ASKING, "WHAT DATE SHOULD WE HAVE THE WEDDING?"
"HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOULD WE INVITE? WHAT ABOUT A NEW HOUSE?"

AH-AH
...OR SOME-THING
"HOW ABOUT GOING TO THE UNITED STATES FOR OUR HONEYMOON? OR EUROPE?" EVEN THOUGH HE'S GOT NO MONEY...
HURRY UP AND GET READY. AI IS WAITING.
クルミ
SOME-THING ALWAYS COMES ALONG TO SPOIL IT
WHENEVER IT LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE MOVING THAT DIREC-TION,
.....
AND THEN HE'D LOOK BASHFUL AND SAY, "I GUESS YOU'LL NEED A WEDDING DRESS, HUH...HA HA HA"
YOU MUST HAVE ASKED HIM, SIS. WHAT IS IT?
I WONDER WHAT IT IS THAT MR. NAGAISHI WANTS TO SHOW US HERE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA
NO IDEA. HE SAYS WE'LL HAVE TO DECIDE IF SHE'S THE GODDESS OF GOOD FORTUNE AFTER WE'VE SEEN HER!!
AND I'D SAY, "TOSHIO, YOU HAVE SHORT LEGS SO I THINK JAPANESE STYLE WOULD BE BEST..."

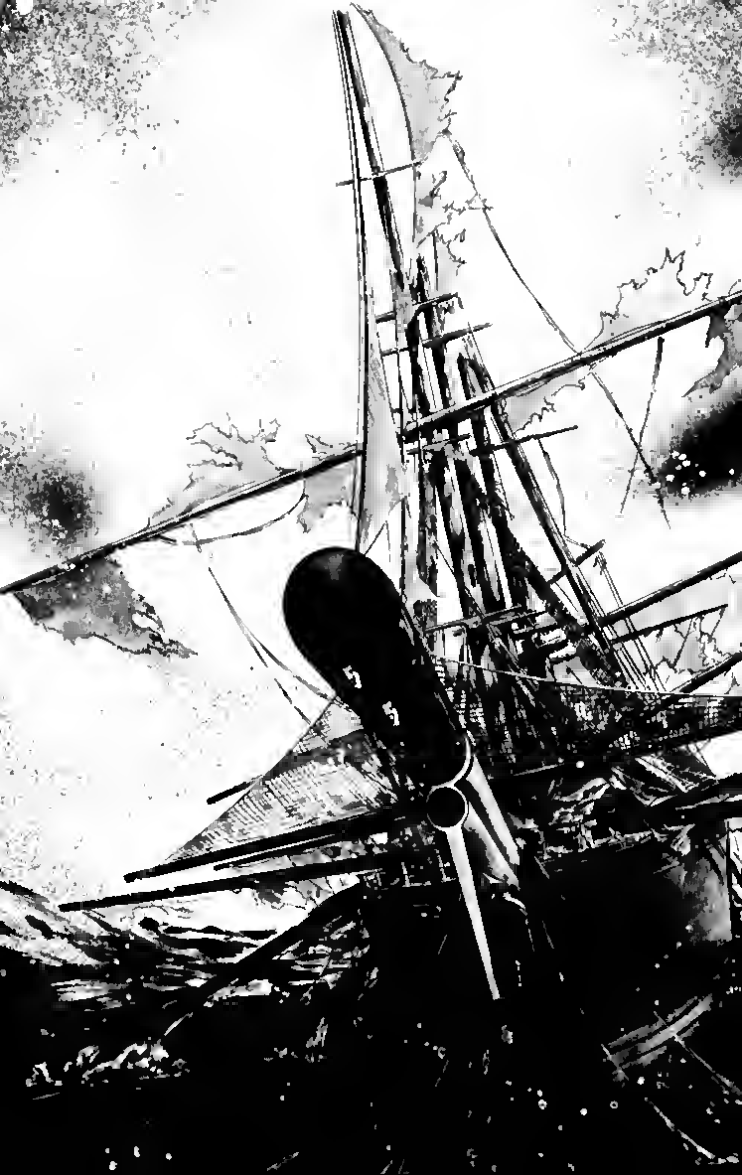
WE'LL BE GOING NOW, MR. NAGAISHI. WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU TO SHOW US THE WAY.
MR. NAGAISHI SURE IS ACTING WEIRD TODAY.
FORCING US TO COME OUT HERE ALL OF A SUDDEN. DON'T YOU THINK SO, HITOMI?
.....
AN ENGAGEMENT RING
SPAAA AACE
KYAHH
...DANG! PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BUSINESS!!

HEINZ, SINCE I REALIZED YOU WERE ALIVE,
I KNEW I HAD TO ARRANGE FOR THESE GIRLS TO MEET YOU...BUT
HURRY UP, RUI!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, AI!?
SIS WAS SPACING OUT.
THE VISIBILITY IS PRETTY LOW, MR. NAGAISHI.
YES...AS YOU GET CLOSER TO THE BOTTOM THE CURRENTS GET PRETTY STRONG, SO BE CAREFUL!!

QUIT GROUSING!! YOU'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH.
BUT WHAT IS IT HE WANTS TO SHOWS US HERE IN SUCH A DANGEROUS PLACE?
I GUESS THAT'S WHY WE HAVE THE LIFE LINES.
THE CURRENTS GET PRETTY STRONG... HUH
THE CURRENTS ARE AS STRONG AS I THOUGHT !!
SIS, IT'S GETTING PRETTY HARD TO SWIM BECAUSE OF THE CURRENT
HE SAYS JUST TO LET THE CURRENT CARRY ..KYAH
MR. NAGAISHI, THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE WE'RE GETTING CARRIED AWAY.
YOU'LL BE FINE JUST LET THE CURRENT CARRY YOU ALONG
AH...

YOU SHOULD SEE IT PRETTY SOON AHEAD OF YOU.
HYE-HH!!
CALM DOWN. ALIGN YOUR BODIES WITH THE CURRENT.
KYAH-HH!
MR. NAGAISHI, THE CURRENTS AT THE BOTTOM ARE TOO STRONG. HAUL US UP!!
YOU SAY THAT, BUT WE'VE GOT NO TIME TO LOOK AT ANYTHING RIGHT NOW!
THAT'S IT. TAKE A GOOD LOOK!!
SIS!
THERE'S SOMETHING UP AHEAD!!

THAT LOOKS LIKE...
AHHH !!
WHAT?
IT'S HUGE!
A CROSS !!
UH... UH!?



LOOK AT THE FIGURE-HEAD ON THE BOW!
A SUNKEN SHIP!
AH.... IT'S...!!
AHHH!!
THE ATHENS APHRODITE!
STOLEN BY NONE OTHER THAN YOUR FATHER!
INDEED!! THAT IS THE ATHENS APHRO-DITE

AND FATHER STOLE IT!?
THE ATHENS APHRODITE!!
UNBELIEVABLE! THE ATHENS APHRODITE WAS MADE INTO A FAKE FIGURE-HEAD AND HIDDEN THERE!! AND FATHER DID IT...
THIS "APHRODITE" WAS PATTERNED AFTER IT!!

MR. NAGAISHI, WHAT IS THE ATHENS APHRODITE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN OUR FATHER STOLE IT?
ACCORDING TO LEGEND, THE ATHENS APHRODITE WAS PLUNDERED FROM ONE OF THE TEMPLES IN THE ACROPOLIS OF ANCIENT GREECE!! BUT ITS HISTORY IS MURKY.
THERE IS A SAYING, "DEATH COMES TO THOSE INVOLVED WITH APHRODITE," BECAUSE NO ONE KNOWS HOW MANY HAVE DISAPPEARED ON HER ACCOUNT!
FOR CENTURIES AN INTERNATIONAL SYNDICATE HAS FOUGHT BLOODY CONFLICTS TO MAINTAIN POSSESSION OF IT.
EVEN THOUGH WE NOW KNOW HE'S ALIVE...
SO THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN EVER SEE PAPA !?
NO MATTER HOW VALUABLE THE SCULPTURE IS...I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
THAT'S NUTS!!
THEN TO KEEP YOU THREE FROM BECOMING INVOLVED AS WELL, HE DISAPPEARED HIMSELF.
IT CAME BY ACCIDENT INTO THE HANDS OF YOUR FATHER, AND HE DISGUISED IT AND HID IT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA..

RAISING THE ATHENS APHRODITE OUT OF THE SEA!!
IT'S DANGEROUS, BUT THERE IS A WAY.
!!
INDEED. NOW THAT WE KNOW HE'S ALIVE,
WE CAN'T STAND BY AND DO NOTHING!!
JUST AS IN THE SAYING, "DEATH COMES TO THOSE INVOLVED WITH APHRODITE."
STILL, IF WE DO THAT, THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF THE SYNDICATE WILL BE DIRECTED AT US!!
I SEE. BY ELIMINATING THE SECRET THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY REASON FOR FATHER TO BE TARGETED!!
AND BY RETURNING HER TO HER TEMPLE IN THE ACROPOLIS ALLOWING THE WHOLE WORLD TO SEE THE TRUTH.
.....
...MISS RUI

EH!?
HITOMI... IT'S AS HE SAID. YOU SHOULD DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM THIS OPERATION.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?
THE OTHER DAY THE RAT SAID THIS APHRODITE WAS THE REASON FOR FATHER'S DISAPPEARANCE...
AND... THAT YOU WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO MARRY TOSHIO...
THAT'S NOT A SITUATION IN WHICH TO GET MARRIED...
NO WAY!! RUI...
IT'S JUST AS THE RAT SAID.
IF THIS DOESN'T GO WELL, THE JAWS OF DEATH WILL OPEN!!

IT IS A VEIL ENTRUSTED TO ME BY YOUR FATHER...FOR THE THREE OF YOU TO USE IN YOUR WEDDING CEREMONIES.
THIS...
IT WAS HIS OFFERING TO YOUR WEDDINGS, EVEN IF HE COULD NOT PERSONALLY BE THERE...
YOU SHOULD TAKE THAT AND GO TO TOSHIO'S SIDE.
HE HAS A RING AND HE'S WAITING FOR YOU!!
BUT, I WANT TO HELP FATHER, TOO...
EVEN IF IT IS FOR FATHER'S SAKE, NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO TAKE YOUR HAPPINESS FROM YOU!!
IT'S WHAT FATHER WANTS... AND WHAT WE WANT, TOO.
OKAY, HITOMI?
SIS...
LEAVE THIS TO US, HITOMI, AND FORGET ABOUT IT. WE'VE GOT IT COVERED
FORGET !?

YES. . FORGET EVERYTHING!! ABOUT YOUR SISTERS AND ABOUT PAPA
THEN YOU CAN GET MARRIED AND BE AT EASE.
INDEED... RATHER THAN NEVER BEING ABLE TO WEAR THAT VEIL AGAIN...
AND RATHER THAN NEVER ALLOWING TOSHIO TO SEE YOU IN IT, WHEN HE IS THE ONE WHO WOULD MOST LIKE TO SEE YOU IN IT. IT WOULD BE BETTER.

AS FOR THIS...THE PERSON WHO WOULD MOST LIKE TO SEE ME IN IT IS FATHER.
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD EVER FORGET OR PART FROM YOU...
WE THREE ARE BLOOD.
HITOMI ...!!
SIS!!

IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO CONTINUE THE DIVE!!
ゴゴゴゴ
ゴゴゴゴ
ゴゴゴゴ
IMPOSSIBLE. THE WATER IS SO MUDDY BECAUSE OF THE CURRENTS THAT I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING!!
WELL? HOW DOES IT LOOK DOWN THERE, RUI?

*TIMED FLOW = CURRENTS THAT CHANGE ACCORDING TO A FIXED SCHEDULE.

THE MUD ALSO HIDES THE SHIP, SO IT IS DIFFICULT TO LOCATE PRECISELY...
IT SEEMS LIKE SOME KIND OF TIMED FLOW*...
AMAZING. THE CURRENTS ARE SO MUCH MORE VIOLENT THAN BEFORE
UH-HUH. THE ONLY TIME YOU CAN SEE THE SHIP OR EVEN GET CLOSE TO IT IS WHEN THE CURRENTS SLOW DOWN.
EXACTLY. THESE TIMED FLOWS ARE THE REASON THE SUNKEN SHIP HAS NEVER BEEN RAISED.
COME BACK UP AND WE'LL START MAKING A PLAN!!
ALL THE MORE REASON WE DON'T NEED TO WASTE TIME NOW!! THERE'S NO POINT IN STAYING DOWN THERE ANY LONGER!!
AHHH. THAT'S A LOT MORE WASTED TIME!!
ANOTHER METHOD?
BUT SURELY THERE'S NO WAY TO SALVAGE THE SHIP IN SUCH A SHORT TIME!!
AND THOSE TIMES ONLY LAST ABOUT A HALF HOUR.
FINE, FINE
RIGHT, SIS!
DON'T BE IN SUCH A HURRY. THIS IS JUST A MATTER OF TIME
YES. I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO THINK OF ANOTHER METHOD

THUD
KODEN
.....
BEEP
BEEP
I CAN I HELP BUT BE IN A HURRY...
WE'VE GOT TO HURRY UP AND RAISE APHRODITE SO WE CAN RESOLVE THIS MESS...
!?
AND ONLY THEN CAN TOSHIO AND I...
EH?
R- RUI! LOOK!!

!!
SUR-ROUNDED BY BOATS!?
HITOMI!! LOOK OUTSIDE!! THE CRUISER IS SURROUNDED BY BOATS!!
WHAT IS IT, SIS!?
HITOMI!!
RESPOND, HITOMI! WHERE ARE YOU!?

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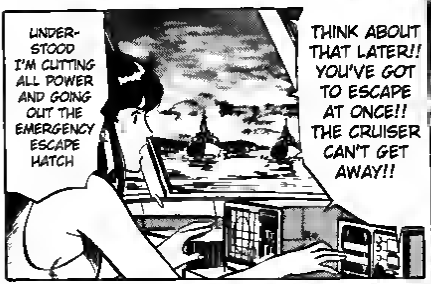
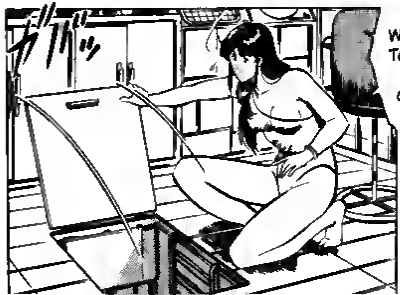
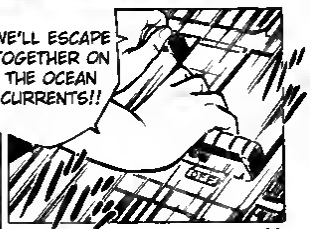
HOW IS HE HERE !?
TOSHIO IS ON BOARD A COAST GUARD CUTTER!?

ドドドドドド


UNDERSTOOD I'M CUTTING ALL POWER AND GOING OUT THE EMERGENCY ESCAPE HATCH
THINK ABOUT THAT LATER!! YOU'VE GOT TO ESCAPE AT ONCE!! THE CRUISER CAN'T GET AWAY!!




WE'LL ESCAPE TOGETHER ON THE OCEAN CURRENTS!!

IT HASN'T MADE ANY MOVE TO ESCAPE, EVEN THOUGH WE'RE THIS CLOSE.
UH...UH-HUH
TOSH, IS THE CAT REALLY ABOARD THAT YACHT?
ニャ〜ン
IT'S CREEPY. IT'S LIKE SHE'S ABANDONED.
THERE'S NO REPLY ON THE WIRELESS AND NO SIGN OF LIGHTS...
BOSS, YA KNOW THAT RUMOR ABOUT THE GHOST SHIP?
HITOMI, WHERE ARE YOU!? THE COAST GUARD IS CLOSE!!
SHEESH!! WE'RE GOING ON BOARD!! OTHER SHIPS, MAINTAIN THE SIEGE!!
I'M TELLIN' YA IT'S CREEPY
DUMBASS!! DOES THAT MODERN SHIP LOOK LIKE A GHOST SHIP!?
I DON'T WANNA
GO ABOARD ...? ON THAT!?
THERE'S NO WAY AN ANONYMOUS TIP IS GONNA BE RIGHT..

UH-OH. I LEFT APHRODITE ...!!
DON'T WORRY!! I'M JUST ABOUT READY TO GO.
MAKE SURE THEY DON'T DISCOVER YOU!!
WH- WHAT ARE TALKING ABOUT!? RIGHT NOW YOU NEED TO ESCAPE!! WE CAN COME BACK FOR THE PAINTING LATER!!
SIS!! GO AHEAD WITHOUT ME!! I HAVE TO GET "APHRODITE" FROM THE DINING ROOM!!
Y- YOU'RE S- STILL SAYING THAT C- CRAZY STUFF!?
...BOSS, YER VOICE IS SHAKIN'
SHEE- SH-
IT'S REALLY CREEPY ...
NO!! WE CAN'T LEAVE ANY FINGER-PRINTS OR EVIDENCE IN THE SHIP! WE'VE BEEN VERY CAREFUL, BUT THAT PAINTING IS COVERED WITH OUR FINGER-PRINTS!!
!!

HITOMI !!
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN LET THAT PAINTING COVERED WITH OUR FINGERPRINTS FALL INTO TOSHIO'S HANDS!'
IT'S MY FAULT THE COAST GUARD GOT SO CLOSE!!
NO!! TOSHIO AND HIS GANG ARE ALREADY THERE!!
YA THINK ANYONE'S ABOARD THIS SHIP!!
HEY! WITHOUT LIGHTS, THOSE ROOMS WILL BE PITCH BLACK
EVERY-ONE SPLIT UP AND SEARCH !!
SOMEONE MAY BE HIDING SOME-WHERE!!
THE POWER SEEMS TO BE OFF. THE LIGHTS WON'T GO ON.
NO ONE'S ON THE BRIDGE ...
OKAYYY ...
QUIT WHINING AND GO !!
CREAAAK

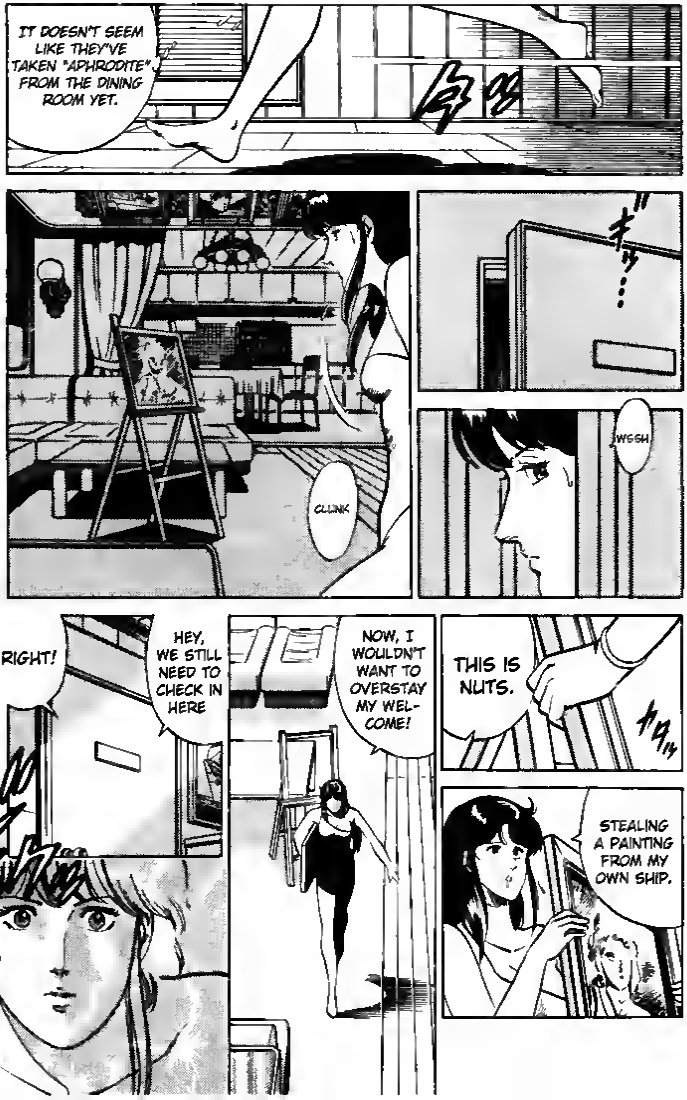
CLUNK

NO ONE IS IN THE CABIN BELOW!!
SAME STORY FOR THE GUEST ROOMS!!
FINE

OF COURSE THEY AIN'T THEY'RE GHOSTS!
FINE!!
NO ONE'S IN THE ENGINE ROOM EITHER.

WHERE ARE THE STAIRS?
AREN'T THEY THIS WAY?

ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THE UPPER-DECK CABIN
LET'S HURRY UP WITH THIS AND GET OUTTA HERE.


IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THEY'VE TAKEN "APHRODITE" FROM THE DINING ROOM YET.
CLUNK
SWISH
THIS IS NUTS.
STEALING A PAINTING FROM MY OWN SHIP.
NOW, I WOULDN'T WANT TO OVERSTAY MY WELCOME!
HEY, WE STILL NEED TO CHECK IN HERE
RIGHT!

HERE WE GO!!
THE LARGE FREEZ-ER..
CAREFUL. IF THE CAT IS ON BOARD, SHE'S IN HERE.
NOT GOOD!! WHERE CAN I HIDE...
WAIT. SHE COULD BE HIDING SOMEWHERE CHECK CARE-FULLY!!
DON'T LOOK LIKE ANYONE'S IN HERE
SHAKE SHAKE
THAT'S RIGHT... LET'S GET OUTTA HERE
IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'S A PLACE ANYONE COULD HIDE.
BUT THIS IS A RIDICU-LOUS PLACE TO HIDE...
IT MAY HAVE BEEN SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT

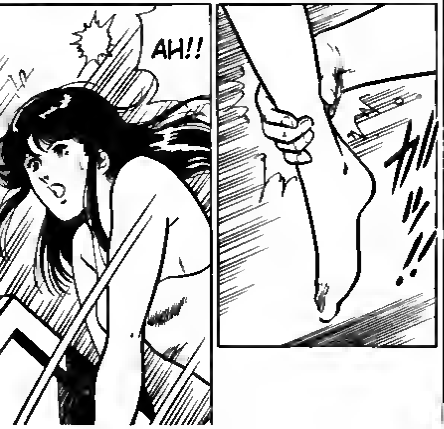
SHOCK
!!...A FREEZER?
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING? DO YOU THINK SOMEONE'S DUMB ENOUGH TO GO IN THAT!?
LOOK!!
HEH
DID YOU FIND SOMETHING TOSHIO!?
UH!!
!!
NO, WAIT!! THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE A PERSON COULD GO, AFTER ALL.
THAT'S RIGHT, LET'S GO.
THAT'S TRUE...
.....!!
A G- G-GHOST MIGHT BE IN THERE.. HA HA HA..
STOP. IF THIS IS A GHOST SHIP, SOMETHIN'S BOUND TA COME OUTTA THERE
Q- Q- QUIT T-TALKING NONSENSE!!

EH!?
TOSHI!! W-WHAT HAP-PENED !!
HYEE!

OH, IT'S THESE GUYS...

FRAIDY-CATS!!
SEE YA. ♡

GH.
WHAT'S THAT ON THEIR FACES...!!
JUST BY SUDDENLY DUMPING CRAB AND OCTOPUS ON HIM...


AH!!

THAT'S BLACK HAIR!!
YOU'RE NOT BLONDE...
!!
UH.. OH
FOOL! DON'T UNDERESTIMATE ME!!
YOU THINK I COULD BE KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS WITH SOMETHING LIKE THIS!?
TURN THIS WAY, CAT. SLOWLY!
W-WHY YOU...
SO YOU'VE BEEN FOOLING ME UP TILL NOW...
.....

.....
GRIN
!!
RAT BOY!!
HEH HEH THERE'S NO WAY I WAS GONNA LET TOSHI SEE YOUR FACE!!
CLUNK
FSST
YOU'D DO BETTER TO MEEKLY ACCEPT THAT RING ...
WITHOUT GETTING DIVERTED BY SOMETHING LIKE "APHRODITE."

IT... WAS YOU!!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO RATTED OUT THIS PLACE TO TOSHIO!!
YEP... I WANTED TO GET YOU AWAY FROM "APHRODITE."
IT WOULD BE A SHAME IF TOSHIO WENT TO ALL THAT TROUBLE TO GET THAT RING FOR NOTHING.. RIGHT!?
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED
.....
SO IT APPEARS !!
I REPORTED THIS SHIP BECAUSE I WANTED TO GET A LOOK AT YOUR ACTIVITIES!!
BUT I'VE DECIDED NOT TO STOP YOU!! AFTER SEEING WHAT YOU WERE UP TO .
THE LONG WAY AROUND SEEMED OKAY ..
WELL...GET OUT OF HERE!! I MADE THIS MESS SO I'LL CLEAN IT UP.
RAT BOY...

AH... LOOK THERE, RUI!!
HITO-MI!!
YOU'RE A LUCKY DEVIL.
YA JERK
THAT SUCH A GIRL WOULD BET HER LIFE SO SHE COULD MARRY YOU...

CAT'S EYE

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